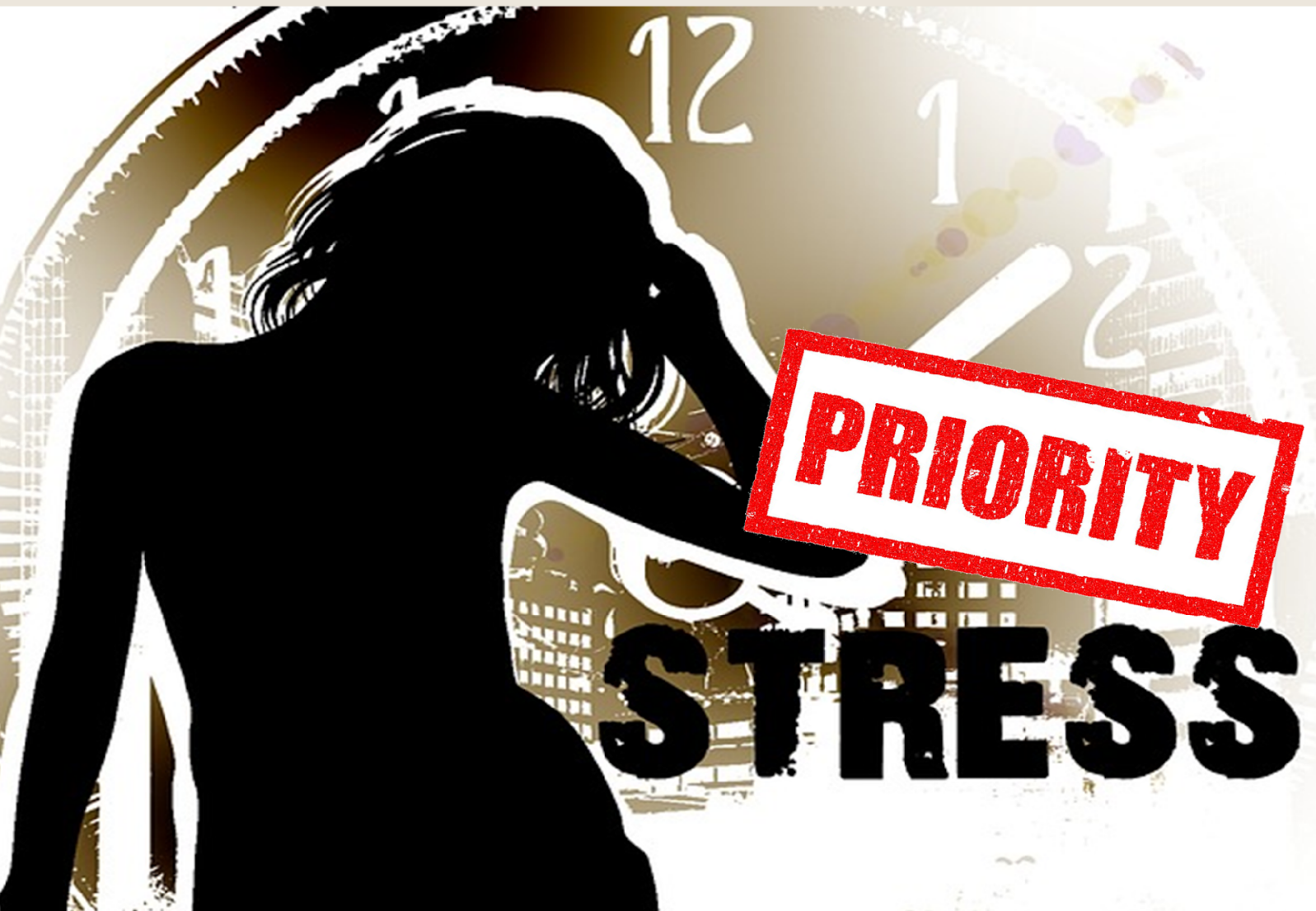


# **SETTING PRIORITIES**

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Is Overcommitment A  
Major Source Of Your Stress?



Effective Hands-on Strategies To  
Prioritize Your Life And Get Your Sanity Back

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## The Demands Of Modern Life

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Every day we're being pushed to the edge with life's different demands. We're burdened by stress and anxiety, even though we have some of the savviest and convenient comforts of living in the 21st century. Nonetheless, with new comforts come new pressures.



The very same innovative technologies, which connect us and allow us to be, informed all the time are also our biggest downfall. We're supposed to be the most productive and efficient we've ever been.

However, we're also constantly bombarded with information 24/7 from every direction that it's difficult to shut off our thinking, which makes our brain release high levels of cortisol and adrenaline, thus escalating our stress levels.

News, information, advertisements – everything is incessantly competing for our attention, and it's a perpetual drain of our time and energy. Rather than slowing us down, it makes us feel we're obligated to do more and more, and then some more. We're trained to partake in this non-stop battle without any regard for pausing.



Our schedules are demanding and on top of that, life continuously throws things your way, and the burdens and pressures of everyday life will never wane, or even slow down.

Being overcommitted and under too much stress makes you feel run-down and exhausted. Overloading leads to decreased effectiveness because you jump from one job to the next, not completing either before you jump to a whole new task.

As a result, the quality of our work suffers greatly. It also makes you susceptible to all types of illnesses since your body is so overworked, it can't defend itself against diseases.

## The Impact Of Stress

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Here are just some of the health problems that arise when we're stressed out:

- High levels of adrenaline
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Heartburn
- Headaches
- Chronic pain in the neck and shoulders
- Ulcers
- Premature aging



We suffer from stress when we suddenly realize we're under this large pile of never-ending work obligations, financial difficulties, and related responsibilities. In addition, if you have kids, that's a whole other story. It's true you can't avoid stress in general, but there are things you can do to help control your levels of stress in an effort to avoid health problems.

**The first step has everything to do with organization; make a plan, draw up a schedule, or write down a list of things you have to do each day** - whatever you feel comfortable with. The important thing is to find a way to manage all the things constantly bombarding you day in and day out. You may find certain things that you're used to doing on a daily basis are overwhelming you without your knowledge.



## 4 Ways To Stay Calm And In Control

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### Meditate

This doesn't have to involve a spa or a health center. All you need is somewhere quiet where you're preferably alone and five minutes. Focus on one positive aspect of yourself, close your eyes, and visualize it. It's easy to get distracted at the beginning. So when that happens, imagine these thoughts forming the shape of a cloud, then simply force them to float away. It's literally that easy.

"Research suggests that daily meditation may alter the brain's neural pathways, making you more resilient to stress," says psychologist Robbie Maller Hartman, Ph.D., a Chicago health, and wellness coach.



### Breathe

It may sound silly, but many of us, sadly, don't know how to breathe properly. The right way to breathe involves your abdomen, which many of us fail to do. "Deep breathing counters the effects of stress by slowing the heart rate and lowering blood pressure," psychologist Judith Tutin, Ph.D., says. She's a certified life coach in Rome, GA.

### Be In The Moment

Direct your attention to how blue the sky is, or what sounds you hear, or how your feet feel as they touch the ground. Really thinking about these small things forces your senses to wake up and do their jobs right. It also decreases the tension in your body and stress levels go down.





## **Connect Socially**

Going out with friends or family, talking, listening, and laughing aloud – all these things help your body release oxytocin (one of your happy hormones). In addition, talking about your day will help keep things in perspective.

## Learning To Prioritize Your Life

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Being overcommitted simply means not being able to make choices among the various options competing for your attention. Choosing among the possibilities is downright difficult, we feel like it's even undoable at times.

This is when you have to step up and take things into your own hands. It may sound a bit difficult to do in theory, but once you take responsibility for your stress and hectic lifestyle, you'll realize you're the one in control and not just a cog in the machine.

However, you have to convince yourself that when you let go of one of your commitments or delegate it to someone else, you're not giving up, and you're certainly not any less of a diligent, hard worker. In fact, it's the opposite. It means you're responsible, level-headed, aware of your limits, and have the capacity to prioritize.



# 12 Tips To Prioritize Your Life

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In order for you to learn how to prioritize, here are a few tips:

## Practice Mindfulness

Step back from everything going on in your day and take some time to really be there in the moment. When you accept and acknowledge your feelings and thoughts, it enables you to lower stress levels.



## Plan Out Your Workday

Think about when would be the best time to start and finish each task you have for the day. Include lunch breaks, exercise, meetings, etc. You'll have a guideline of when everything should be done and things won't run amok and feel hectic.

## Work In Batches

A great way to reduce your workload is to break down big problems into smaller chunks. Dealing with smaller parts is easier to tackle than one big, daunting job.

## Checklists Can Save You

This is particularly helpful when doing repetitive jobs, especially when you have several deadlines and a full schedule. Checklists avert mistakes and save time and your sanity.



## Cut Back

It sounds too difficult to even contemplate, but the things on your to-do list are never going to end, you have to make the decision to cut back on your own. Try choosing only

4 important things to accomplish each week. It'll be a struggle at the beginning, but you'll be amazed by how much the quality of work has increased.

## **Say 'No' To Three Things Per Day**

Stop saying 'yes' all the time. We say yes because we're too nice, we don't think things through, we don't want to look bad, or we don't want to miss out on opportunities by saying no.

## **Delegate**

This is a great alternative to saying no. It allows you to get the job done, even if it's not in the same way you would do things, and help others step up to the plate.



## **Renegotiate Your Commitments**

If you can't say no, or delegate, consider renegotiating your commitments. Ask for a different deadline; reschedule a meeting or an appointment. You'll be surprised by the results.

## **Divide The Days Of The Week**

Instead of doing everything every single day, make a day just for errands, finish your calls before noon, pay your bills all at once - doing things in a batch helps you stay focused and organized. It's also an extremely efficient way of organizing your time.

## **Put Your Health At The Top Of Your List**

Exercise, eat slowly, do yoga, meditate. Another great thing you can do to maintain optimum health - both mental and physical - is to take some time off. You'll thank yourself for it.

## Schedule Some Playtime

Make time for play throughout the day and take regular breaks during the day. Benjamin Franklin always advised his friends that the best approach for high efficiency is to split your days into three parts, one for work, one for play, and one for rest. He always stressed the importance of leisure time. Most of us view leisure time as a waste, but in fact, play and work are equally important and we shouldn't value one over the other. In fact, it's this playtime that boosts the quality of our work and productivity – just look at Google.



## Redesign Your Workplace

Draw up plans of what you want your dream workplace to be like, figure out a budget, and then quickly get to work. The first thing you should do is figure out how to make your workspace attractive to you. The second thing you should focus on is how to get all your senses to work in your workplace because when your senses are engaged, you're moving with the flow of energy, not against it. This means less negativity, more focus, and definitely more productivity.

What your eyes see first paves the way for your other senses; that's why first impressions are so important. Choose your preferred color scheme, move furniture around, or get some new ones. Bear in mind that the most important piece of furniture you use extensively is your chair so make sure it's comfortable, supports your back, and matches your personal style.

If you can, try tweaking the lighting a bit to get the right type of mood. You can also add artwork, rugs, mirrors, plants – things that add character to your workspace without disrupting others, but still manage to turn it into a place where you can feel relaxed,

creative, and productive.

Your olfactory system has the ability to forge into your brain some of the most unforgettable memories you'll ever make. So making the place where you work smell nice is also one important tip that works wonders for your mood. When you're in a good mood, cortisol levels drop.

What you hear, even it is white noise, is a crucial factor in deciding whether your stress levels go up or down. In addition, listening to soothing sounds engages the release of oxytocin.

This is why background music is extremely important. You can listen to relaxing music to help you focus and be creative. You can also invest in a water fountain to bring the sounds of soothing cascading water into your work area. There are also applications you can download that give you a whole slew of choices to pick out the best background sounds that best suit your mood.

## **Final Thoughts**

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You do have control over your stress levels!

You really do!

So take the time to make yourself a priority; it will serve you well to prioritize your life in such a way as to reduce your levels of stress for improved health and wellness.